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ABSTRACT

There is no lack of debate regarding year-round schooling. Emotions run high when school districts tamper with the "traditional" agrarian school calendar and adapt a year-round calendar. This study examines one program in a multi-track year-round elementary school, a tutoring program delivered during the students' intersession. Through interviews, surveys, analysis of grades recorded on report cards, and analysis of Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS--the state's criterion referenced testing program)u scores, the program is evaluated to determine whether goals for the program are being met. Survey data reveal that students, parents, and teachers all feel overwhelmingly that the program is effective at meeting stated program goals. Report card data do not show a statistically significant increase in grades after students attended the program, but there are many intervening variables for which there was no control. TAAS scores reveal that a significant number of students who participated in the program were able to master the test at their grade level. Additional convenience factors, such as transportation, cost, and timing, contribute to the program benefits. Appendices include: the 1996-97 district calendar; Intersession Tutoring Program Surveys, survey data, and samples of survey comments/suggestions; and report card data. (Author/ND)

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Positive Effects of Intersession Tutoring in a Year-Round School

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ABSTRACT

There is no lack of debate regarding year-round schooling. Emotions run high when school districts tamper with the "traditional" agrarian school calendar and adopt a year-round calendar. This study examines one program which is in place in a multi-track year-round elementary school, a tutoring program delivered during the students' intersession. Through interviews, surveys, analysis of grades recorded on report cards, and analysis of TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills - the state's criterion referenced testing program) scores, the program is evaluated to determine whether goals for the program are being met. Survey data reveal that students, parents, and teachers all feel overwhelmingly that the program is effective at meeting stated program goals. Report card data do not show a statistically significant increase in grades after students attend the program, but many intervening variables were not controlled for. TAAS scores reveal a significant number of students who participated in the program are able to master the test at their grade level. Additional convenience factors, such as transportation, cost, and timing, contribute to the program benefits.

INTRODUCTION

There is a growing body of literature on the topic of year-round education. Most studies report either positive academic gains or no negative impact on academic performance when a year-round calendar is adopted (Six 1993, Winters 1994, DeLaro 1994, Kneese 1994, Roby 1995). The school which is the focus of this evaluation has implemented an Intersession Tutoring Program in order to provide remediation to at-risk students. (An intersession is the break between instructional periods on a year-round calendar. Instead of three months off during the summer, students on this campus attend school for three months followed by a one month intersession. This schedule continues on a rotating basis. Each month, one of four different tracks is on intersession, while the other three tracks are in session. For a sample of the school's calendar, see Appendix A.) This program, which brings students back on campus for one week of small group tutoring during the four week intersession, is evaluated herewith.

PARTICIPANTS

The study was conducted in a suburban elementary school in a Gulf Coast State that serves approximately 855 students grades pre-kindergarten through five. A total of 40.8% of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch. The school is ethnically diverse, with a population which includes 43% Caucasian, 26% Hispanic, 22% African American, and 9% Asian.

Students who are below level, have received a grade of D or F (below 75) in either math or language arts, are in danger of receiving a failing grade in those two subject areas, or qualify for Title I Reading Enrichment services are invited to attend Intersession Tutoring classes for one of the four weeks during their intersession. The Intersession Teacher focuses instruction on math and language arts in a thematic setting designed around the premise of taking a cruise for the week. Curriculum is based, in large part, on information provided by classroom teachers about specific weaknesses of the students.

All students who attended a minimum of three days of intersession tutoring during at least one intersession were given the opportunity to respond to the survey developed for this study. The parents of these students were given the opportunity to respond to the parent survey. Math and language arts teachers as well as Title I Reading Enrichment teachers of the students who attended a minimum of three days during at least one intersession were also given a teacher survey to complete. All respondents participated voluntarily and completed the surveys anonymously.

Face validity for these surveys is easily established, as there are only four questions and a space for recording comments and suggestions, all of which apply directly to the Intersession Tutoring Program. Reliability would depend heavily on the willingness of the respondents to

answer honestly. (For a copy of these three surveys, refer to Appendix B.) The total number of students who met the criteria of attending a minimum of three days of the program during at least one intersession was 176.

Additionally, TAAS (Texas Assessment of Academic Skills) Test data were analyzed for the students who attended at least three days of this intersession tutoring. The TAAS test is a criterion referenced test. The intent of the test is to determine whether students have mastered the State mandated essential elements, or objectives, of the reading and math curriculum (grades 3, 4, and 5) and writing (grade 4 only). Percentages of program participants who mastered these tests are provided herewith.

MEASURES

The first method used to gain data was to interview both the principal and the Intersession Tutoring teacher. In order to gain specific context evaluation data, both were asked what the goals and objectives of the program are, to describe the program, to relay any perceived advantages or problems with the program, and to provide any additional information they deemed appropriate.

Both the principal and teacher noted that the primary objective of the program is to improve the participating students' self-esteem. They noted that students who are behind typically receive fewer "success messages" at school, and therefore like school less. The tutoring program is designed to meet the students at their own level, at a smaller pupil teacher ratio, and move the students forward in the curriculum as much as possible in the week they attend.

The secondary objective, as stated by both the principal and teacher, is for the students to achieve academic gain. It is considered a secondary objective because the perception is that if

students feel better about themselves and about school, the academic gains will be more easily facilitated, both in Intersession Tutoring and the regular classroom.

When asked if there are any written or documented goals and objectives of the program, both the principal and teacher stated that they are not aware of any. The results of these interviews, therefore, constitute the context portion of the evaluation.

The evaluators developed surveys to distribute to three key populations who could provide valuable information regarding the program and its influence on student self-esteem. Surveys were distributed to students who met the criteria for the study, their parents, and their math and language arts and Title I Reading Enrichment teachers.

Questions are parallel on the three surveys. Question one seeks to determine if the program was enjoyed, question two asks about perceived academic gain, question three asks if there is positive impact on self-esteem in school, question four asks if the students like school better as a result of the program. Additional room is provided for comments or suggestions.

In an attempt to assess whether students demonstrated academic progress, report card grades (recorded in numerical form from zero to one hundred) were analyzed. Students' grades in math and language arts were recorded for the six weeks period immediately before attending the program (pretest) and the six weeks period immediately following the program (posttest). These data were analyzed using a T-test.

TAAS test results for the third, fourth, and fifth grade program participants were analyzed to determine the percentage of these students who were "at-risk" throughout the year who were able to meet the criteria for mastery of this grade-level criterion referenced test as established by the State. Scores were analyzed for students who were enrolled for at least three days of

intersession tutoring and who took any one of the three portions of the test (reading and math for third and fifth grade and reading, math, and writing for fourth grade).

RESULTS

Results reported below reflect data collected by three means; surveys completed by students, parents, and teachers; pretest-posttest (report card) data; and percentage of program participants who mastered the TAAS Test. Survey data are reported first, as they more closely reflect student self-esteem and attitude toward school, reported to be the primary objective of the program.

Student survey data are overwhelmingly supportive of the Intersession Tutoring Program. Surveys report that 98% of students enjoyed the program (83% very much and 15% somewhat). Students reported that they perceive that they learned something in the program 98% of the time (73% very much and 25% somewhat). Students reported that they have more confidence in school as a result of the program at a level of 94% (76% very much and 18% somewhat). As to whether they like school better as a result of the program, 91% reported that they do (73% very much, 18% somewhat).

Parent survey data are similarly positive. All parents reported that they believe their children enjoyed the Intersession Tutoring Program (80% very much, 20% somewhat). Parents reported that they believe that their children made academic progress in the program 98% of the time (63% very much, 35% somewhat). Parent surveys reflect that parents perceive that their children now have more confidence in school as a result of the program 93% of the time (63% very much, 30% somewhat). Parents reported that they believe their children like school better as a result of the program on 95% of the surveys (45% very much, 40% somewhat).

Teacher survey data echo the support for the program's goals found in the student and parent surveys. All teachers reported that they believe their students enjoyed the Intersession Tutoring Program (95% very much, 5% somewhat). Likewise, all teachers reported that their students made academic progress as a result of attending the program (52% very much, 48% somewhat). All teachers also reported they believe the students have more confidence in school as a result of the program (71% very much, 29% somewhat). A majority of teachers (95%) reported that they believe their students like school better as a result of the Intersession Tutoring Program (71% very much, 24% somewhat). (For more complete survey data, see Appendix C. For samples of responses from the comments/suggestions portion of the surveys, see Appendix D.)

A level of statistical significance was not achieved in any of the three quantitative measures conducted on report card data. An analysis of language arts grades, math grades, and a combination of both math and language arts grades had p values of .612, .584, and .975 respectively.

Language arts grades had the following values: pretest mean 78.48, standard deviation 8.25, posttest mean 78.15, standard deviation 7.71, p =.612. For math grades, values were: pretest mean 79.27, standard deviation 8.23, posttest mean 79.63, standard deviation 8.19, p=.584. When language arts and math grades were combined for a global look at the report card grades before and after attending the program, values were: pretest mean 78.88, standard deviation 8.23, posttest mean 78.89, standard deviation 7.97, p =.975. (For more detailed information on report card data see Appendix E.)

TAAS Test data reflected results surprising to the researchers. The students who participated in this program did so because they were either receiving failing grades in their language arts or math classes, or were at-risk of receiving failing grades. The TAAS Test is designed to measure mastery of the State-mandated curriculum at the students' current grade level. In the area of reading, 59% of the students who participated in the program achieved mastery on the test. Additionally, 21% of the students who took the reading test mastered all six of the objectives tested by TAAS. In the area of math, 67% of the program participants achieved mastery level, with 18% mastering all 13 objectives on the test. On the writing test, 86% of the program participants mastered the test, and 27% mastered all seven of the test objectives. Considering the at-risk nature of this group of students, these findings are considered significant by the researchers.

DISCUSSION

A total of 176 different students attended Intersession Tutoring for a minimum of three days during at least one intersession. During an eight month period, taking into account all absences, and at a conservative estimate of five hours of instruction per school day, students received a total of 5,495 hours of Intersession Tutoring instruction.

During the course of the interviews with the principal and program teacher, hidden advantages of the program were discovered. One such advantage is the fact that transportation is provided for the students attending the program. Since the buses are running to deliver the "on-track" students to class, the tutoring students simply ride their regular bus to school. There is also no cost to the parents for the program, as the teacher is paid using compensatory funds. In this community, the principal related, there had been traditionally very poor attendance at summer

school, the remediation alternative for schools on a "traditional" agrarian calendar. Cost and transportation were factors. This program thus provides remediation to at-risk students without financial or transportation burdens to parents.

The timing of the remediation is also perceived as a benefit by both the teacher and the principal. As opposed to the summer school model, where students have a full nine months of instruction to "fall behind", this model provides remediation after only three months, while the school year is still in progress.

Results of the student, parent, and teacher surveys are overwhelmingly positive. Students state that they enjoyed the program, that they perceive they have made academic progress as a result of the program, that they have more confidence in school as a result of the program, and that they like school better as a result of the program. Parents and teachers have similar perceptions regarding the results of the program. In each case, more than 90% of respondents reported positive effects of the program.

The analysis of the report card grades did not yield statistically significant gains in scores in math or reading or in a combination of the two after attending the program. Many variables which cannot be controlled for, given the data used in this analysis, render this data less powerful than the evaluators would have liked. (An example of such a variables would be time and curriculum covered between attendance at the Intersession Tutoring Program and the end of a reporting period.) However, no other pretest data were available at the time of the request for evaluation. Since the program is designed to meet the student at his/her present level, and only at-risk students attend the program, the use of report card data to measure academic gain is a misnomer. The teacher states that the students in the program are typically working on material

that is more than six weeks behind where "on level" students at that grade level are working. There is no attempt made to predict what posttest scores for these students might have been in the absence of the Tutoring Program. This method was a weak attempt at determining whether the students had achieved academic progress as it is contaminated with many intervening variables. Considering these factors, looking for significant gains on report card grades would not be expected to yield positive results.

TAAS Test data were surprising. Though these students were among the most "at-risk" students who took the TAAS test, greater than half of this population achieved mastery on each of the three tested subjects (59% mastered reading, 67% mastered math, and 86% mastered writing). These results support the effectiveness of the program.

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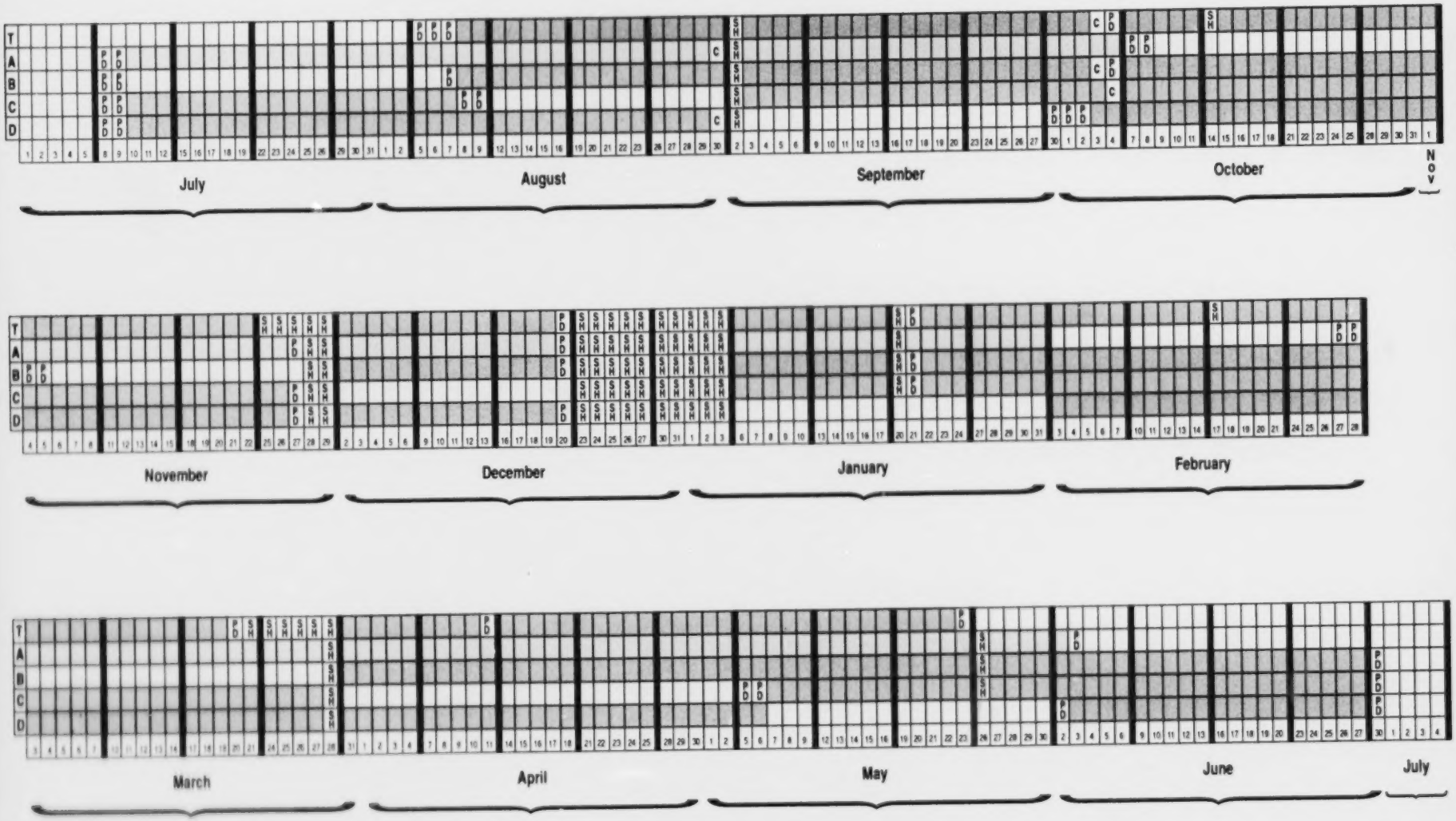
Appendix A

CYPRESS-FAIRBANKS INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT
1996-97 YRE CALENDAR



SIX WEEKS/INCLEMENT WEATHER DAYS FOR 1996-97

TRADITIONAL	TRACK A	TRACK B	TRACK C	TRACK D
Aug. 8 - Sept. 20 = 31 days	July 10 - Aug. 23= 33 days	Aug. -8 - Sept. 20 = 31 days	July 10 - Sept. 13 = 30 days	July 10 - Aug. 23 = 33 days
Sept. 23 - Nov. 1 = 27 days	Aug. 26 - Oct. 4 = 28 days	Sept. 23 - Nov. 1 = 28 days	Sept. 16 - Oct. 25 = 29 days	Aug. 26 - Nov. 1 = 26 days
Nov. 4 - Dec. 19 = 29 days	Nov. 4 - Dec. 19 = 31 days	Dec. 2 - Jan. 17 = 24 days	Oct. 28 - Jan. 17 = 32 days	Nov. 4 - Dec. 19 = 31 days
TOTAL DAYS - 87	**TOTAL DAYS - 92**	**TOTAL DAYS - 83**	**TOTAL DAYS - 91**	**TOTAL DAYS - 90**
Jan. 6 - Feb. 14 = 28 days	Jan. 6 - Mar. 14 = 29 days	Jan. 22 - Feb. 28 = 28 days	Jan. 22 - Feb. 28 = 28 days	Feb. 3 - Mar. 14 = 30 days
Feb. 18 - Apr. 10 = 31 days	Mar. 17 - Apr. 25 = 29 days	Mar. 31- May 9 = 30 days	Mar. 3 - May 16 = 27 days	Mar. 17 - Apr. 25 = 29 days
Apr. 14 - May 22 = 29 days	Apr. 28 - June 2 = 25 days	May 12 - June 27 = 34 days	May 19 - June 27 = 29 days	Apr. 28 - June 27 = 26 days
TOTAL DAYS - 88	**TOTAL DAYS - 83**	**TOTAL DAYS - 92**	**TOTAL DAYS - 84**	**TOTAL DAYS - 85**
Inclement Weather Days: January 20 February 17	Inclement Weather Days: January 20 May 26	Inclement Weather Days: January 20 May 26	Inclement Weather Days: January 20 May 26	Inclement Weather Days: March 28 June 2
TOTAL SCHOOL DAYS - 175	**TOTAL SCHOOL DAYS - 175**	**TOTAL SCHOOL DAYS - 175**	**TOTAL SCHOOL DAYS - 175**	**TOTAL SCHOOL DAYS - 175**

Appendix B

INTERSESSION TUTORING PROGRAM STUDENT SURVEY

Please circle one answer for each question. Your answers will be kept confidential.

1. Did you enjoy the Intersession Tutoring Program?

   Very much Somewhat Not at all

2. Did you make any academic progress (did you learn anything) in the Intersession Tutoring Program?

   Very much Somewhat Not at all

3. Do you feel better about yourself (have more confidence) in school as a result of the Intersession Tutoring Program?

   Very much Somewhat Not at all

4. Do you like school better as a result of the Intersession Tutoring Program?

   Very much Somewhat Not at all

5. In the space below, please make any comments or provide any suggestions you might have as to how we could improve the program.

April 17, 1996

Dear Parents:

We are currently conducting an informal evaluation of our Intersession Tutoring Program. Our records show that your child attended this program during one or more intersession(s). Please take a few moments to fill out this survey and send it back to school with your child as soon as possible. He/she can give it to his/her homeroom teacher. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Your input is very valuable and important. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

INTERSESSION TUTORING PROGRAM PARENT SURVEY

Please circle one answer for each question.

1. Did your child enjoy the Intersession Tutoring Program?

   Very much Somewhat Not at all

2. Do you think your child made any academic progress in the Intersession Tutoring Program (did he/she learn anything)?

   Very much Somewhat Not at all

3. Do you think your child feels better about himself/herself (has more confidence) in school as a result of the Intersession Tutoring Program?

   Very much Somewhat Not at all

4. Do you think your child likes school better as a result of the Intersession Tutoring Program?

   Very much Somewhat Not at all

5. In the space below, please make any comments or provide any suggestions you might have as to how we could improve the program.

April 17, 1996

Dear Teachers:

We are currently conducting an informal evaluation of our Intersession Tutoring Program. Please take a few moments to fill out this survey and put it in Robert's box by the end of the day on Friday, April 26. Your responses will be kept confidential.

Your input is very valuable and important. Thank you for taking the time to fill out this survey.

Parent surveys are also being sent. As these are returned, please put them in Robert's box as well.

INTERSESSION TUTORING PROGRAM TEACHER SURVEY

Please circle one answer for each question. Think of the students in your class who attended tutoring as a whole, and respond accordingly.

1. Did your students enjoy the Intersession Tutoring Program?

Very much Somewhat Not at all

2. Do you think your students made any academic progress in the Intersession Tutoring Program?

Very much Somewhat Not at all

3. Do you think your students feel better about themselves (have more confidence) in school as a result of the Intersession Tutoring Program?

Very much Somewhat Not at all

4. Do you think your students like school better as a result of the Intersession Tutoring Program?

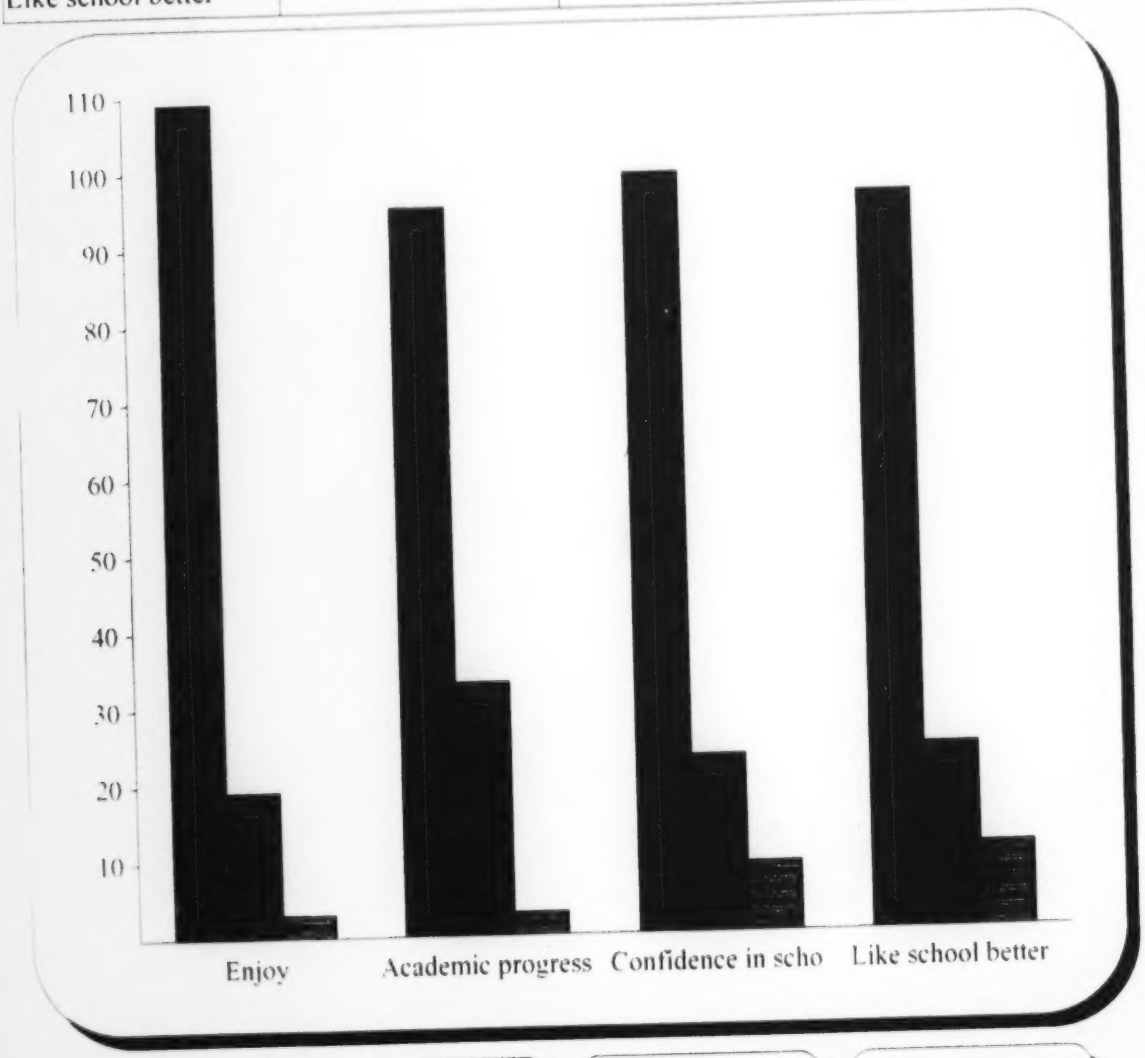
Very much Somewhat Not at all

5. In the space below, please make any comments or provide any suggestions you might have as to how we could improve the program.

Appendix C

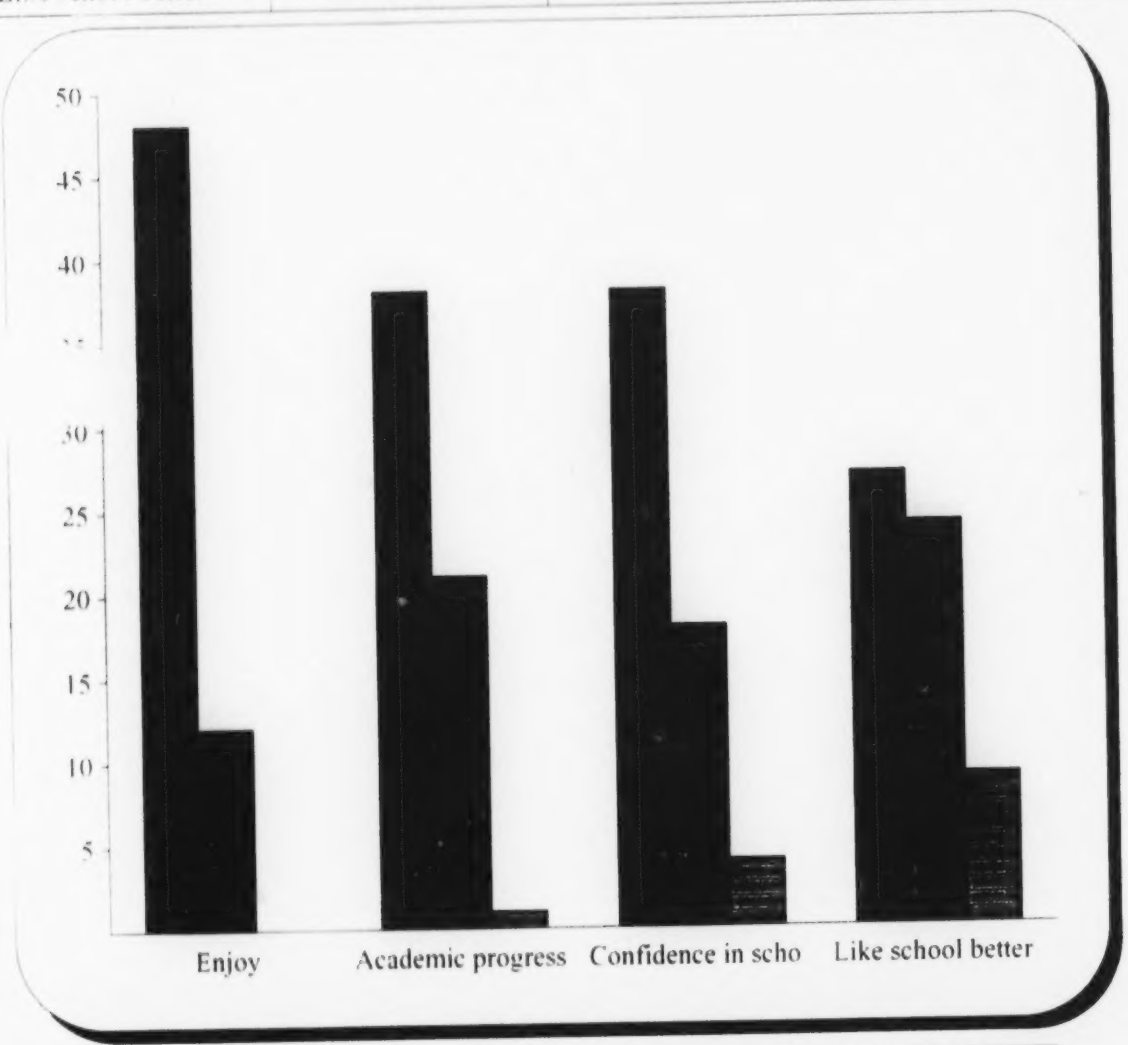
Student Survey Data

Students - 131	Very much	Somewhat	Not at all
Enjoy	109 - 83%	19 - 15%	3 - 2%
Academic progress	95 - 73%	33 - 25%	3 - 2%
Confidence in school	99 - 76%	23 - 18%	9 - 7%
Like school better	96 - 73%	24 - 18%	11 - 8%



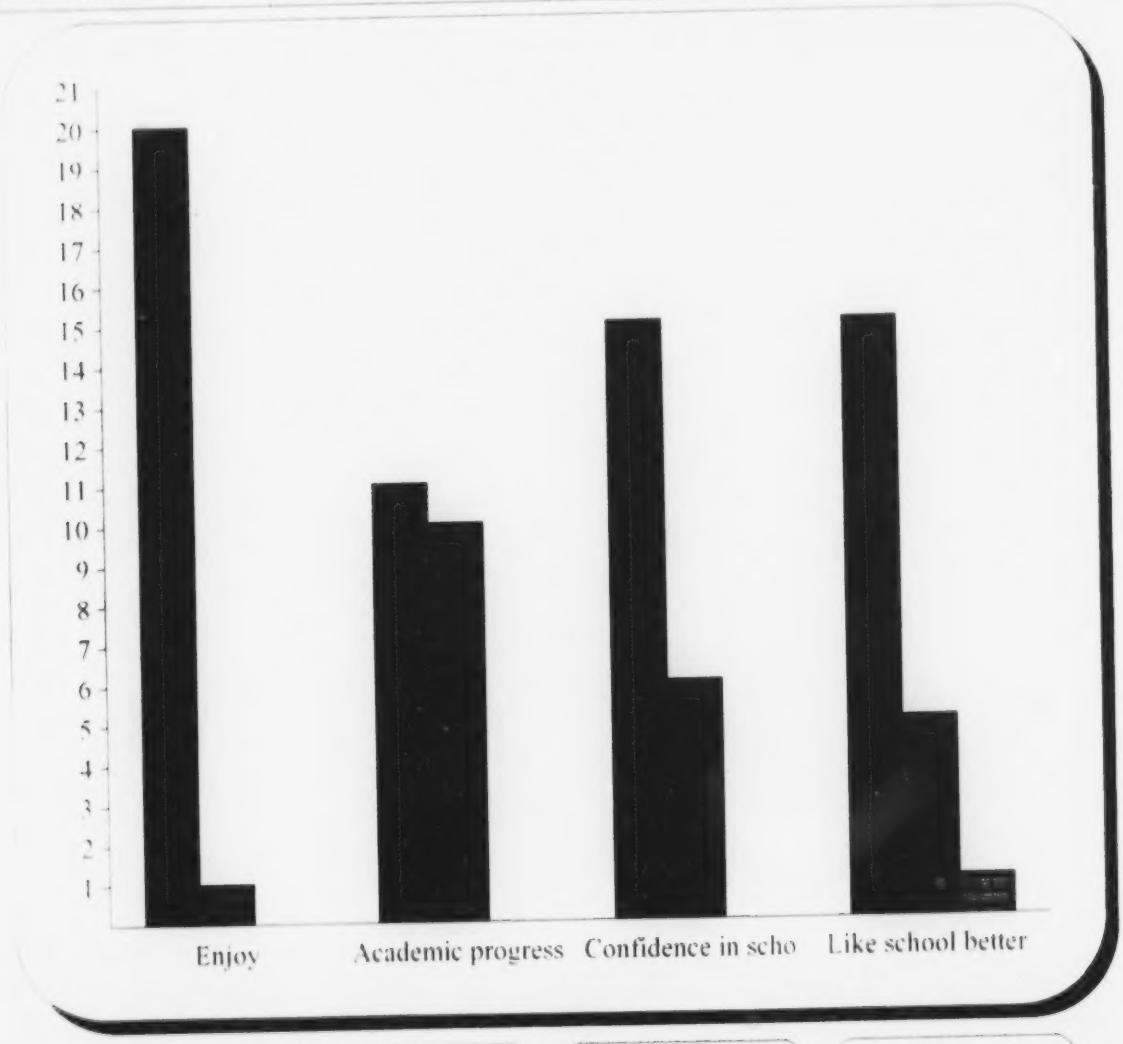
Parent Survey Data

Parents - 60	Very much	Somewhat	Not at all
Enjoy	48 - 80%	12 - 20%	0 - 0%
Academic progress	38 - 63%	21 - 35%	1 - 2%
Confidence in school	38 - 63%	18 - 30%	4 - 7%
Like school better	27 - 45%	24 - 40%	9 - 15%



Teacher Survey Data

Teachers - 21	Very much	Somewhat	Not at all
Enjoy	20 - 95%	1 - 5%	0 - 0%
Academic progress	11 - 52%	10 - 48%	0 - 0%
Confidence in school	15 - 71%	6 - 29%	0 - 0%
Like school better	15 - 71%	5 - 24%	1 - 5%



Appendix D

SURVEY COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS SAMPLES

Student Surveys

No changes. I like it the way it is.

I would like it better if they talk about science.

I want to learn more about Germany.

The program is great how it is.

Program was good. I liked it a lot.

Program is great for me. Thank you.

I'd like to study more of Australia and writing. I'd also like it if we can study more math.

Get more books about animals and more games and more recess.

We were the first ones to know bigger division. And it helped me a lot on my writing. I like tutoring, it helps me a lot on school work!!!!!

I want to go back and it's fun.

Parent Surveys

He enjoyed the games to improve learning skills. More games to teach skills highly recommended and fun. Thank you for teaching and taking an interest.

The tutoring session attended was only for 1 week, so I don't feel that a whole lot was accomplished. It helped but not to the extent needed. My son has a reading problem and I don't see any great improvement. One week just isn't long enough.

I wish she could have done the tutoring for two weeks.

He learned a lot for the amount of time. It helps him feel that he fits in better! Helps him feel more self-confident!

My son has developed self confidence after attending Intersession Tutoring. I think the students who need help get more attention during the tutoring. I really appreciate this program, and I request to continue this program for kids who are doing below level. Thank you.

Jennifer has always enjoyed the tutoring program.

I would like my daughter to continue in the Intersession Tutoring Program if she still needs it because I feel it was very helpful for her.

I feel that the tutoring program was very helpful for my son.

I feel this program has really helped my child, especially in her weak places. Her reading has improved very much.

If possible, make it more fun and rewarding.

He came out of tutoring with a very positive attitude and a lot of self confidence. Other relatives notice the improvement. A lot of this was lost after about 3 weeks of being back in school.

The program is excellent.

Teacher Surveys

I have seen growth in all of my students who were provided tutoring services. I think it is very beneficial that the tutoring teacher tailors the curriculum to the special needs of the students based on the classroom teacher's input.

It's great - my children enjoy it. I like being able to fill out a form to tell what to work on.

I feel that it really helps the students who need an "extra boost". I only wish more of my students would have come.

Make it mandatory!!

The only way it could be better is if it was mandatory!

My students look forward to Intersession Tutoring - they are excited about going. The wonderful teacher and the exciting activities she plans for the children encourage them to return each intersession.

Donia has done a great job!

Donia has done a great job of keeping the students motivated.

I think Donia does a very good job. I spent 2 days in the program as a sub and I like the way she has the day divided and how she conducts the class. I also like the way she is going around the world and has incorporated more social studies into the curriculum. The kids love it.

My kids LOVE it! The other students are disappointed that they don't get "invited".

It would be nice if the program was for two weeks per grade level.

They look forward to going. They love Mrs. K. These students need even more extra help. They make as much progress as they are capable of. They feel important and seem to remember what they learned. They already like school. Intersession Tutoring helps maintain it.

My kids don't say much about the tutoring. They gripe quite a bit about "wasting" time when they could be playing. This is their opinion. I, however, feel Intersession Tutoring is beneficial for all of us. The teacher is very enthusiastic and supportive. ORGANIZED!

Two weeks would be best. Groups should not go over ten.

I think the Intersession Tutoring Program has been wonderful this year. The kids really love Mrs. Kolodziejcyk and she is a great teacher. I've seen much improvement in the work of those students who have attended. Keep up the good work!

Students came back from March and had fun, reiterated on their writing assignments and plans, and used what they learned to add to our class plan/writing.

It really helped to reinforce the skills already taught. It really helped the children's confidence and self esteem. Intersessions are sometimes difficult for young children, but all my students looked forward to tutoring. (And those who weren't being tutored "begged" to go.) All my students love Mrs. K and all of them wanted to come to tutoring. That made it very special for my little ones who needed a "boost" with their self esteem. They felt like the "chosen ones"! I often wish the tutoring could continue for at least two weeks. However, one week is better than none at all. I am so grateful that we offer the tutoring program.

Students love Mrs. Kolodziejcyk's supportive, professional manner and expertise. I do too!

Intersession Tutor Survey

I think my students enjoy themselves while they are in tutoring because they can have more attention from the teacher than in the regular classroom. I try to encourage students to believe they can do anything. I have seen progress in my students during the week they are with me. They are always very proud of themselves when they finally learn a skill they have been working on for a while. It is really difficult for me to determine if the students I see have a changed attitude toward school once they have visited my classroom because I don't see them for another three to four months; however, several teachers have mentioned to me that their students seemed more confident in themselves since they had attended Intersession Tutoring. Several teachers have also mentioned that when the "invitations" for tutoring are distributed to the students they are excited and look forward to attending tutoring classes. To me, this is a very good sign.

Appendix E

REPORT CARD DATA

Intersession Tutoring Program
Language Arts Grades

	Pretest		Posttest			
N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
106	78.48	8.25	78.15	7.71	.51	.612

Intersession Tutoring Program
Math Grades

	Pretest		Posttest			
N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
106	79.27	8.23	79.63	8.19	.55	.584

Intersession Tutoring Program
Language Arts and Math Grades in Combination

	Pretest		Posttest			
N	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	t	p
212	78.88	8.23	78.89	7.97	.03	.975